

Hawk Relay has filed a petition with the FCC requesting they allow reimbursement of relay service providers geared towards deaf-blind people. This leads FCC to question if DBRS fits in the definition of TRS under section 225 of the Telecommunication Act. AADB believes that the DBRS fits the definition of TRS.

The purpose of the DBRS is to provide Communication Facilitators (CF) to be physically present at the site where the deaf-blind person is making the call. The CF will serve as a relay operator. In this role, the CF will relay information in the deaf-blind person's preferred communication mode so that the deaf-blind person can make a telephone relay call whether by video, TTY, or voice.

Why Do We Need the DeafBlind Relay Service (DBRS)?

As it stands now, many deaf-blind people are unable to access the current system due to their vision loss or impairment. Telecommunications equipment such as the Tele-Braille or TTYs with external Large Visual Displays manufactured in the mid-1980s and early 1990s are no longer available. Also, many deaf-blind people don't have the skills or knowledge to call people by using computers, screen readers, notetakers or other devices.

Most of the current telecommunications technology that most deaf or hard of hearing people can use is not accessible. Examples include Video Relay Services (VRS) or Voice Carry Over (VCO) devices. In addition, some deaf-blind people cannot independently make phone calls without the help of family members or friends. This is because they have limited or no vision. They may need tactile signs or to use a one-on-one interpreter to relay the signs used by the other caller on the TV screen or monitor. We also have to consider that a good number of deaf-blind people have other disabilities that are not addressed. For example, some deaf-blind people have developmental disabilities or other physical disabilities that prevent them from participating in telephone calls without assistance.

If the DBRS telecommunications model is used, Communication Facilitators (CF) can be employed to assist deaf-blind people in making videophone and/or video relay calls. They then can access telecommunications services in much

the same way as deaf-and hard of hearing people are able to access them.